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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English language press

Presidency discusses border demarcation and elections

Al-Rai Al-Aam reported that a meeting of the Presidency yesterday discussed a roadmap on North-South border demarcation by the technical committee in accordance with 1.1.56 Line as well as elections. The meeting urged subcommittees to expedite their work so that the border line is drawn on paper and approved by the Presidency before it is drawn on the ground.

State Minister at the Presidency Lual Chol said the Presidency also discussed achievements of the NCP-SPLM Joint Political and Executive Committee co-chaired by Vice President Taha and GoSS Vice President Machar. The meeting reviewed, inter alia, reports of subcommittees on the Blue Nile State, Southern Kordofan, Elections, Darfur, peace and unity and the National capital.

Agreement to demobilize 3500 SAF and SPLA personnel

Al-Intibaha carried a report stating that the Member of the Southern Sudan Commission Acuer Agir said the National DDR Council's higher committee agreed to provide budget for demobilizing 3000 SPLA and SAF personnel - 2000 in southern Kordofan and 1000 in the Blue Nile - during the remaining part of the current year.

He said several subcommittees were set up to raise funds for the programme and to prepare for a round table meeting in Juba in October.

Arab League and AU will ask UN to defer ICC indictment - Amr Musa

Akhbar Al Yom reported that the Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Musa said on Wednesday that the Arab League and the African Union would push, at the UNGA, for invoking article 16 of the Court to get a resolution passed by the Security to defer ICC indictment of Sudanese officials.

Taha to meet Minnawi tomorrow

Al-Wifaq stated that Vice President Taha has emphasized the need to achieve peace in Darfur and affirmed Government's commitment to implement the DPA.

SLM (Minnawi) official Al Fadil Al-Tijani has revealed a prospective meeting between Taha and Minni Minnawi tomorrow Friday in El Fasher to discuss pending issues to push the peace process forward.

500 persons victims of landmines in southern Sudan

Al-Ahdath carried a report stating that the number of victims of landmines and other explosives reached about 500 persons since the conclusion of the CPA in 2005.

The Director General of Juba Hospital K. Lado informed Miraya FM that the hospital continues receiving increasing number of victims every day and urged GoSS to exert additional efforts to disarm civilians and ex combatants.

New rebellion emerged in Darfur

Al-Sahafa reported that an armed group calling itself “the Borders Liberation Front” has declared rebellion against the state in Tulus Locality in South Darfur.

Reliable sources informed the newspaper that scores of persons from Falata tribe who once fought on the side of the People’s Defence Forces (PDF) have started an insurgency in the area.

The group is led by Sulaiman Jamooz and Herkilis and it is based in the areas of Saberki and Dimso in the northeast of the town of Tulus from where they launch their military operations.

Eyewitness said the group carjacked about ten governmental and private vehicles and also kidnapped a physician of Tulus hospital.

The group has warned PDF and SAF not to venture out of Tulus and sealed all routes leading to the town.

The Governor of South Darfur State called an urgent meeting of the Security Committee of the State and urged leaders of the tribe to intervene to defuse the crisis by engaging in talks with the new rebels and report to him their demands.

Commissioner of Tulus Locality Siddiq Abdul Nabi confirmed the presence of about 68 persons who are ex-PDF combatants who declared rebellion and disobedience.

Sources said it was likely that the rebellion erupted due to the failure of the State Government to resolve conflict between the Falata and Habaniya tribes over borders between the Localities of Buram and Tulus in South Darfur and that might be the reason why they call themselves “Borders Liberation Front”.

Websites/International Headlines

Ban recommends 6,000-strong UN force for Chad, Central African Republic

(UN News Centre) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today proposed that the Security Council consider sending 6,000 United Nations troops to replace a European Union force in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic (CAR), which have both been wracked by violence and civilian displacement in recent years. The mandate of the EU’s military force, known as EUFOR, is set to expire on 15 March 2009, and currently comprises 3,300 troops.

The blue helmets who would take their place will require an “over the horizon” capability to be able to deploy quickly “should the security situation rise to levels beyond the capacity of a United Nations force,” especially during the transition period, Mr. Ban wrote in his latest report on the nascent UN Mission in CAR and Chad (MINURCAT).

The Secretary-General said the Council should leave any resolution authorizing this new force in draft form until the world body has firm guarantees on troop contributions and other support from Member States.

Progress has still been made since July in both Chad and CAR, the Secretary-General said, commending the leaders of the two countries.

MINURCAT has taken steps in the reporting period to expand its political and civil affairs presence, and is also working to increase its promotion and protection of human rights.

Security Council, Ban deplore terrorist attack outside US embassy in Yemen

17 September - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council have strongly condemned today's terrorist bombing outside the United States embassy in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, which has killed at least 16 people and wounded many others. Media reports say that the casualties in the attack include Yemeni security guards at the embassy, as well as civilians outside the building.

"Attacks on diplomatic facilities and personnel worldwide are against international law and are totally unacceptable," Mr. Ban's spokesperson said in a statement. "The Secretary-General calls on the Yemeni authorities to spare no effort in bringing those responsible to justice."

Ambassador Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso, which holds the rotating Council presidency this month, read out a statement in which the 15-member panel also strongly condemned the attack.

Germany agrees new mandate for Sudan forces

(AFP) - The German parliament voted Wednesday to renew the mandate for German troops in the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and the UN-African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID) until August 15, 2009.

Up to 75 German soldiers will be able to participate in UNMIS, up from fewer than 40 currently. The UNAMID mandate allows for 250 soldiers to monitor the 2006 peace agreement for Darfur, although just a handful of German troops are actually on the ground in the strife-racked province.

UN admits Darfur troop shortfall

(Sudan Tribune) Only half the troops intended for a joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force for the Sudanese region of Darfur will be deployed by 2009, the UN says. Alain Le Roy, the new head of UN peacekeeping, said only 13,000 of the 26,000 troops authorized for the UNAMID force would arrive by the end of 2008.

It had planned to have more than 20,000 staff deployed by the start of 2009. But by last month it had only 8,100 troops and fewer than 2,000 police on the ground.

In July, Unamid's commander, Nigerian Gen Martin Agwai, expressed optimism that 80% of the force could be deployed by year's end. That optimism was echoed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

But Mr Le Roy said: "I think 80% sadly has been, as far as I know so far, a bit optimistic." He said the arrival of Thai and Nepalese units in Darfur had been delayed, adding that he expected an additional 3,000 troops and police to be on the ground by the end of November, primarily from Ethiopia and Egypt.

Sudan slams UN rights expert as 'EU agent'

(AFP) - Sudan on Wednesday denounced an independent UN human rights official as an "agent of the European Union" after she criticized Khartoum's human rights record in the conflict-riven region of Darfur.

"The special rapporteur on Sudan, Miss Sima Samar, has demonstrated that she is an agent of the European Union," Sudan's ambassador in Geneva, John Ukec Lueth Ukec, told the UN Human Rights Council.

In her report to the council, which was released on September 9, Samar slammed Sudan's "grim" human rights record and accused the government in Khartoum of affording impunity to rights abusers. She highlighted "indiscriminate" and "disproportionate" bombing of civilians by Sudanese forces in the east of Darfur, as well as ongoing sexual violence and a wave of arbitrary arrests and disappearances.

But the Sudanese ambassador said these claims were unfounded and that the human rights situation in all of Sudan apart from Darfur was "marvelous". "If Sudan is totally devoid of human rights then how can she (Samar) fly into Sudan, and travel to cities safe... enjoying good sleep in hotels and even visits with prisoners?" Ukec asked. "Let Sima Samar do (a) report on Afghanistan ... or in Iraq if she will ever get out of the Green Zone," he added.

Ukec said that Human Rights Council had been "hijacked" by the European Union and that countries such as Britain and France were seeking to reimpose a colonialist agenda. "We have not forgotten what France has done in Algeria, Vietnam and inhumane treatment in colonies in recent past," he said.

"France talks of human rights, while it accommodates those who terrorise innocent people in Darfur. It talks of impunity, but those who rape women, kill peacekeepers they accommodate in five star hotels in Paris," he charged.

Ukec -- a former rebel from the south of the country who now sits in the national unity government -- said last week that rebel groups were to blame for the continued unrest in Darfur.

France might be open to deal on Sudan's Bashir

(Reuters) - France suggested on Wednesday it could support suspending an international indictment of Sudan's president for war crimes if Khartoum met several conditions including ending the killings in Darfur.

The African Union, Arab League and other alliances have urged the U.N. Security Council to use its powers under Article 16 of the ICC statute to block any proceedings against President Bashir to avoid shattering the fragile peace process in Darfur.

Although the ICC judges are not expected to make a decision before October or November, officials from some Western governments have been saying privately that issuing a warrant for Bashir's arrest might do more harm than good.

France's U.N. Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert told reporters that Paris might be open to the idea of freezing any ICC action against Bashir provided specific conditions were met. Ripert made it clear that bomb attacks and killings in Darfur would have to cease. Also, Khartoum would have to open a "full inclusive political dialogue" with all groups in Darfur, relations with Sudan's neighbor Chad would have to improve, and Khartoum would need to try two indicted war crimes suspects.

If the Sudanese government were to meet those four conditions, Ripert said, "Why not?"

Britain also has not ruled out the possibility that it would back an Article 16 suspension. European diplomats have said that London's position was similar to France's.

However, Amnesty International and the United Nations' former human rights chief Louise Arbour spoke out yesterday against blocking ICC moves on Bashir.

"To put ICC proceedings on hold in Darfur would send a dangerous signal to would-be war criminals that justice is negotiable and the Security Council can be held hostage to their threats," Arbour wrote in the International Herald Tribune.

New U.N. peacekeeping chief, Alain Le Roy of France, told reporters that he was very worried about how Khartoum would retaliate if the ICC decided to indict Bashir.

Diplomats say Khartoum has threatened to expel the UN/AU peacekeeping force, known as UNAMID, in Darfur if Bashir is indicted, although some U.N. officials play this down. "There have been contradictory messages," Le Roy said. "I'm not sure they have made up their mind" how to retaliate.

Le Roy also said he did not expect UNAMID to reach 80% percent of its full deployment by the end of the year, as the United Nations had hoped, due to a delay in the arrival of Thai and Nepalese units in Darfur.

France says Sudan's cooperation with ICC a condition to defer Bashir Indictment

(Sudan Tribune) September 17, 2008 (NEW YORK) – The French government today called on Sudan to cooperate with the ICC for it to consider suspending the indictment of Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir.

The French Foreign ministry deputy spokesman Frederic Desagneaux said in statements reported by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) today that Sudan must cooperate with The Hague based court on extraditing two officials for which arrest warrants were issued by the ICC.

"Concerning Sudan, we call on the Sudanese authorities to commit, without delay, to the necessary cooperation with the ICC and the international community, starting with the application of arrest warrants already handed down by the Court for Ahmed Haroun and Ali Kushayb" Desagneaux said.

Later the French Ambassador to the UN Jean-Maurice Ripert appeared to be taking a softer stance on the issue.

"We had extensive meetings with representatives of the African Union (AU) and I think we are passing the same kind of messages [to Sudan] which stop the killings, stop the military action in Darfur...Do what you can do to alleviate the human suffering and improve the humanitarian access to Darfur...increase and improve the capacity of the authorities to participate in a political dialogue with all political forces....improve your relationship with Chad" Ripert said.

The French envoy stressed that Sudan "has to cooperate with the ICC".

"I said it repeatedly here. Whatever they do they have to cooperate officially with the ICC. If they want to trial their own citizens in their own countries this is allowed by the [Rome] treaty. But they have to do that in agreement with the ICC. It is never too late to cooperate" he said.

"There are two indicted; Mr. Haroun and Mr. Kushayb. They can cooperate with the ICC on how to try those two people if they want to cooperate. We will see then what happens" the French official added.

"For the moment there is no initiative. If the issue is raised we'll see. We will see the circumstances" before saying that if Sudan meets these conditions along with facilitating

deployment of UNAMID they are willing to support the suspension. (ST)

Darfur rebel says repelled Sudanese army attack

(Sudan Tribune) — Rebels say they repelled an important attack by Sudanese troops in northern Darfur and captured some of their weapons and vehicles on Wednesday.

SLA fighters said more than one hundred army vehicles attacked their bases near Tawila, in North Darfur state, some 50 kilometres (30 miles) west of the state capital El-Fasher. "We were fighting the government troops around Tawil for all the day," said Ibrahim Al-Hillo, a commander from the SLA led by e Abdel Wahid Al-Nur. He also added that troops from the SLA-unity participated in the battles.

Mahgoub Hussein the spokesperson of the SLA-Unity confirmed the fierce fighting near Tawila adding they destroyed about 95 government vehicles and seized other 46 with heavy military material.

There was no confirmation from the Sudanese army about the fighting also, the hybrid peacekeeping force said they were prevented from entering the area by the Sudanese army.

This is the first time that SLA rebels from Abdel Wahid Al-Nur and Abdallah Yahia groups have fought together against the Sudanese army in the war torn region. (ST)

Sudan Planes Bombing Darfur Positions - Rebels

KHARTOUM, Sudan **(AFP)**--Sudanese government aircraft were bombing north Darfur rebel positions on Thursday in the latest reported attack in the war-torn region, rebels said.

Fighters from the Sudan Liberation Army have reported an upsurge in attacks in the past two weeks, with heavy battles between insurgents and government and militia forces backed by aircraft.

Much of the reported fighting has taken place near Tawila in North Darfur state, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of the regional capital El-Fasher.

"There is bombing both at Khazan Tungur and near Tawila with Antonov planes," said Abu Bakr Kadu, a commander from the SLA-Unity faction speaking from Darfur.

Rebels on Wednesday said approximately 100 government vehicles packed with troops launched an attack, but were beaten back when separate SLA factions joined together in a unified force.

"The bombing has continued again after Wednesday, but there are no government soldiers now," Kadu said.

The report couldn't be independently confirmed.

Thousands of civilians are reported to have fled fighting in the past week, with their villages looted and burnt by government-supported militias.

However, the Sudanese army dismissed the rebel reports, insisting the only military action under way is against bandits responsible for a spate of attacks on aid convoys.

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Algeria, Sudan may ask UN to delay Bashir war crimes probe

(AFP) — Algeria and Sudan may ask the UN Security Council to delay war crimes proceedings against Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir, Algeria's foreign minister said Wednesday in a radio interview.

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci told national radio that Sudan and Algeria had been consulting for months on the "very unfortunate" war crimes charges sought by the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in July.

After meeting Tuesday with a Sudanese delegation, Medelci said in the interview broadcast Wednesday that discussions between the two countries covered the option of asking the 15-member Security Council to freeze the proceedings.

The council can defer for one year, renewable, any investigation or prosecution by the ICC.

Such a move would require a majority of nine votes, including the concurring votes of all five Security Council permanent members.

Following preliminary investigations, ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo asked the court for an arrest warrant for Beshir on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

The Sudanese envoy Djallel Youcef El Dakkir responded by saying he had earlier met with Algeria's president Abdelaziz Bouteflika where the president reaffirmed the country's "steadfast" support for Sudan" in the "allegations" of the ICC and hoped to find a diplomatic solution to the Darfur problem.

Bouteflika also called for "the need to coordinate, during the meeting at the UN General Assembly, between non-aligned countries, Islamic countries, the African Union and the Arab League so that a strong common position in favour of Sudan can be found," El Dakkir said.

Sudan has been working hard to ward off potential charges from the ICC, drumming up support from the African Union and the Arab League.

It is sending a top-level delegation headed by Vice President Ali Osman Taha to the UN General Assembly opening in New York later this month.

According to the United Nations, up to 300,000 people have died in Darfur and more than 2.2 million have fled their homes since rebels rose up against Khartoum in February 2003. Sudan says 10,000 people have been killed.

Sudan labels UN rights investigator as EU agent

(Reuters) - Sudan accused on Wednesday United Nations human rights investigator Sima Samar of being an EU agent working with Brussels to tarnish the country's image as it struggles to restore peace in Darfur.

John Ukec Lueth Ukec, Sudanese ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, made his comments to the U.N. Human Rights Council after a report from Samar, former Afghan deputy premier, said the human rights situation in Sudan was worsening.

"The special rapporteur on Sudan, Miss Sima Samar, has demonstrated that she is an agent of the European Union rather than (being) the Human Rights Council rapporteur," Ukec said in a text distributed by the U.N.

"She is the catalyst planned to trigger the justification for the EU to slash the modest achievements of Sudan in its determination to restore decent human rights in the war-affected zone of Darfur," the envoy said.

Ukec said both Samar and the EU, several of whose members supported her in the 47-member Council on Tuesday, had "a hostile agenda towards Sudan".

Samar, who has visited Sudan frequently since taking up her post in 2005, said in her report that the situation in Darfur remained grim, with killings of civilians by both government and rebel forces, arbitrary arrests and torture as well as attacks on non-combatants by government troops and planes.

Sudan insists that the situation in Darfur is greatly improved and one Khartoum official told a separate news conference in Geneva on Wednesday that 98 percent of the region was safe for civilians and humanitarian workers.

Hasabou Mohamed Abderrahman, Sudan's commissioner for humanitarian affairs, said violence came from rebels, who were trying -- with support of countries like France and the United States -- to sabotage moves towards a final peace accord.

During Tuesday's Council debate on Samar's report, Sudan -- backed by other African and Islamic states -- called for her mandate to finish by the end of the year. A Sudanese official said such a move would help end the conflict.

Several EU countries accused Sudan on Tuesday of failing to make progress in ending what they say are gross rights violations in Darfur.

The Council, created three years ago to replace a much-criticised earlier body, currently has a Nigerian president. Islamic and African states have a dominant voice as they are normally backed by China, Cuba and Russia.

At the separate news conference, Sudanese officials said Khartoum was totally committed to negotiating an end to the long running Darfur conflict but would continue to fight what they called criminals attacking ordinary people and aid convoys.

